Plumbers,
Gasfitters and
Drainlayers Board

Outcome of consultation

Self-certification scheme for plumbers and drainlayers Proposal on endorsement requirements, conditions, fees, and audit levy

August 2026

Consultation

Between 15 June 2026 and 13 July 2026, the Board sought feedback on its proposal for the self-certification scheme for sanitary plumbing and drainlaying work. The consultation was intended to inform the Board's decisions on the endorsement requirements, conditions, fees, and audit levy to be set through a legal notice. After considering the consultation feedback, the Board finalised its decisions. The requirements and costs have now been set through the Plumbers, Gasfitters, and Drainlayers (Self-certification by Plumbers and Drainlayers) Notice 2026. The Notice has been published, and the scheme will commence on 7 September 2026.

The proposal was set out in three parts.

- Part 1: Minimum standards for endorsement (eligibility requirements)
- Part 2: Terms and conditions that apply to endorsed practitioners
- Part 3: Endorsement fees and audit levy

A copy of the consultation document, including background information on the scheme, can be found here. The Notice is also published on the Board's website.

Submissions received

The Board would like to thank all those who took the time to provide their feedback and respond to the consultation.

The Board received 170 consultation submissions, including one response from Master Plumbers, the largest industry membership body.

Of those who responded to the consultation, 27% were plumbers, 19% were drainlayers and 53% practised both trades.

51% of respondents expected to apply for an endorsement to self-certify their work in one or both trades, and 50% expected to apply in the first year of the scheme.

For those who responded to the question on business type, 37% were small businesses (five staff or less); 26% were medium/large business (more than five staff); 23% were sole traders; 9% were employees; and 3% were contractors.

A quarter of respondents lived in Auckland (26%), with other main areas represented were Wellington (14%), Canterbury (12%), Waikato (9%) and Northland (7%).

Summary of responses that agreed with the proposal

Of the submissions received, 54% thought the proposed endorsement settings were workable in practice for Certifying Plumbers and Certifying Drainlayers. Submitters who supported the proposed endorsement settings highlighted:

- Workable in principle with appropriate safeguards.
- Strong support for robust auditing — especially in the first 12-24 months.
- Potential to reduce delays from council inspections.
- Could improve efficiency for routine work.
- Comparison to aspects of the gas certification model (which has worked well) seen as positive.

For the proposed insurance requirement, 46% considered it to be clear and workable.

For the proposed endorsement fees and audit levy, 25% of respondents thought they were reasonable in terms of the benefits and obligations of participation. Comments included that the fees are reasonable but should be reviewed after the third year.

Summary of responses that disagreed with the proposal

Endorsement settings and operating requirements

For the proposed endorsement settings, 7% said they were not workable and 29% said changes were needed. Common themes that emerged across these submissions:

Certifying licence and training requirement

Submitters felt that certifying practitioners should already be able to certify without additional endorsement or training.

Concerns about recordkeeping requirements

Submitters felt the recordkeeping requirement would create additional time burden, particularly for small operators without office staff. The proposal also lacked clarity on what documentation is required.

In-person inspection requirements

The site visit requirement was considered problematic for businesses covering large areas with multiple jobs.

Insurance

For the proposed insurance requirements, 13% considered them to not be workable. Comments included:

Lack of clear minimum standards

Respondents felt the proposal was too vague by not specifying minimum coverage amounts, required insurance types and whether existing business policies were sufficient.

Insurance costs seen as a significant additional burden

Many respondents asked for minimum insurance types and coverage levels to be specified. Some suggested public liability and professional indemnity should both be required. Others asked whether company-level insurance would be sufficient for employed endorsed practitioners, whether proof of insurance would be required, and how run-off or continuity of cover would be managed if a practitioner changes employer or a business closes.

Concerns about self-declaration system

Submitters stated that insurance should be verified at application, not just declared when applying for the endorsement, and that self-declaration provides no consumer protection. There is also a gap regarding liability tail coverage when practitioners change employers or businesses fail.

Endorsement fees and audit levy

For the proposed endorsement fees and audit levy, 17% said they were not reasonable, 23% were unsure, and 56 individuals provided comments, which included:

Fees and levy are too expensive

Submitters expressed concern about the overall cost of the scheme. The up-front cost of approximately $2,260 (endorsement + audit levy) for a 3-year endorsement was said to be difficult to justify for sole traders and small businesses. Many felt they already pay enough through existing licensing requirements and should not face additional costs.

Introduce a tier-based system

Several proposed tiered fees based on business size or a per-certification charge rather than flat fees, and expressed concern that costs will ultimately be passed to customers, undermining the scheme's purpose of reducing building costs.

Responses that were outside of consultation scope and/or the scheme

We received a number of responses that raised broader policy matters that were outside the scope of the consultation or what the Board has jurisdiction over in the scheme. These comments include:

- Comparisons to gasfitting certification.

- Preference to retain independent council inspections entirely.
- Request for a separate endorsement pathway for sole operators.

Board's response to submitters concerns

Endorsement settings and operating requirements

Certifying licence and training requirement

While Certifying Plumbers and Certifying Drainlayers are already licensed to carry out and supervise sanitary plumbing and drainlaying work, self-certification involves additional responsibilities, including certifying compliance with the building consent process, maintaining supporting records, participating in audits, and meeting ongoing endorsement conditions. The Act establishes a separate endorsement framework for these responsibilities rather than automatically granting self-certification rights to all certifying practitioners. The Board is now responsible for overseeing this new scheme.

The Government has structured the self-certification scheme for plumbing and drainlaying differently to gasfitting. This was a Government decision, not a Board decision. While gasfitting certification is based on safety requirements, self-certification of plumbing and drainlaying is based on compliance with the consent. The endorsement is optional, intended to recognise practitioners who have chosen to participate in the self-certification scheme and have met the additional requirements that apply to that scheme.

The initial training and assessment will be a requirement when applying for the endorsement. The purpose of the training is to ensure practitioners understand the new scheme, including what work can be self-certified, how Certificates of Compliance must be completed and issued, what evidence is required, how supporting documentation must be retained, and how the scheme interacts with building consent processes. Practitioners may also be required to complete additional continuing professional development relevant to self-certification where this forms part of the endorsement requirements.

Recordkeeping requirements

The Notice will require practitioners to have and maintain systems that are sufficient to support certification. It does not require a particular software system, template, or business process. The is because practitioners operate in different ways and many will already have records, job management systems, and quality assurance processes that can be adapted for the scheme. Practitioners will not be required to have a particular system or particular ways of meeting these responsibilities. For many practitioners existing work recording systems will likely meet this requirement.

The Board will support implementation through guidance, training, and operational material explaining the evidence and documentation expected for self-certification.

In-person inspection requirement

The Board considers that the in-person inspection requirement is one of the key integrity and quality controls. Self-certification will require the endorsed practitioner to inspect the work in person before certifying it. The key requirement is that the practitioner issuing the certificate must be satisfied, based on their own inspection, that the work complies with the building consent. This means the inspection itself must be carried out in person, and the endorsed practitioner must attend the site and inspect the work before certifying it.

The endorsed practitioner whose name appears on the Certificate of Compliance is personally responsible for the decision to certify the work. As certification involves the practitioner providing assurance that the work complies with the building consent, the Board considers it appropriate that the practitioner making that judgement has personally inspected the work before issuing the certificate.

The Board also considers the in-person inspection requirement to be an important safeguard during the establishment phase of the scheme. As a new scheme, the Board does not yet have the information, audit history, or performance data that building consent authorities have developed through many years of inspecting sanitary plumbing and drainlaying work. The Board will need to build this understanding over time through audits, monitoring, and oversight of endorsed practitioners.

The Board considers that requiring the endorsed practitioner to personally inspect the work before certification is an appropriate control while the scheme is being established and confidence in its operation is being developed. The Board intends to keep the operation of the scheme under review and may reconsider specific requirements in the future based on operational experience, audit outcomes and evidence gathered through the scheme.

Quality assurance and auditing

A number of submitters raised concerns that self-certification could lead to poorer quality work or reduce independent oversight. The Board acknowledges these concerns and notes that maintaining confidence in the quality of sanitary plumbing and drainlaying work is critical to the success of the scheme.

The scheme includes several safeguards, including eligibility requirements, mandatory training, recordkeeping obligations, audit activity, disciplinary processes, and the ability for the Board to suspend or remove an endorsement where appropriate. The Board considers that these measures provide an appropriate framework for ongoing oversight of practitioners participating in the scheme.

Insurance

Insurance requirement

The Board acknowledges that many submitters sought more certainty regarding the insurance arrangements that would meet the Notice requirements. While the Board does not prescribe specific insurance products or minimum coverage levels, guidance has been developed to assist practitioners in considering appropriate insurance arrangement.

Practitioners will not be required to hold a particular type of insurance set by the Board. It will be for practitioners to discuss the scope of work they do and will be certifying with their insurance provider and determine the appropriate type and amount of insurance they will need. Insurance may be personal if the practitioner is in business by themselves or it may be a business or company policy which covers employed practitioners who certify work. Limiting the scope of insurance could possibly exclude a practitioner or company from participating in the scheme.

The Board also notes the comments regarding run-off cover, continuity of insurance arrangements, and practitioners changing employers. These matters will remain the responsibility of practitioners and their insurers. Practitioners should seek independent professional advice regarding the insurance arrangements appropriate to their circumstances.

Endorsement fees and audit levy

How the scheme is funded

The Act requires that these ongoing costs of the scheme are paid for by the practitioners who choose to take part in the scheme. The Government has funded the Board's work to set up the self-certification scheme. Once the scheme is up and running, the Board has to cover the ongoing costs of running it. This includes things like processing applications, maintaining systems, and carrying out audits.

Because participation in the scheme is voluntary, practitioners can decide whether the benefits of self-certification outweigh the costs and obligations associated with endorsement. Practitioners who choose not to participate can continue to use the existing building consent inspection process.

Cost recovery approach

The Board is only going to recover the costs of running the scheme and will not make a profit or use the money for anything outside the self-certification scheme. As the scheme is completely new, the Board has had to estimate participation rates, certification volumes, audit activity, and operational costs when setting the fees and levy set in the Notice. These estimates represent the Board's best assessment of how the scheme is expected to operate during its initial period. Actual participation and costs may differ from these assumptions once the scheme is live.

The endorsement fee and audit levy will only be used to recover the costs of administering and overseeing the self-certification scheme. Revenue collected through the scheme will not be used to fund the Board's wider licensing, disciplinary, or regulatory functions.

The Board is committed to operating efficiently and ensuring that fees and the levy are no higher than necessary to recover the costs of running the scheme. The Board will monitor participation levels, audit outcomes, and overall costs over the three-year cycle. This information will be used when the fees and levy are reviewed. If participation is higher than anticipated or operating costs are lower than expected, this may reduce future costs. Equally, if participation is lower than anticipated or costs are higher than forecast, adjustments may be required to ensure the scheme remains appropriately funded.

Tier-based system

Affordability was an important consideration as the scheme is voluntary and high participation will support the scheme's objectives. As the Board regulates individual practitioners, not plumbing and drainlaying businesses, the endorsement framework is practitioner-based. A per-certificate or per-job charging model would not align well with the structure of the scheme at commencement. Many of the Board's costs arise before any Certificate of Compliance is issued and do not vary directly with the number of certificates issued by a particular practitioner. These include application assessment, register maintenance, operational support, system costs, audit capability, governance, and administration. A per-certificate model would also create greater uncertainty for cost recovery during the first cycle of a new scheme, when actual participation and certification volumes are not yet known.

The Board acknowledges concerns raised about affordability, particularly for sole traders and smaller businesses. As the scheme matures and better information becomes available regarding participation levels and actual operating costs, the Board will review the fees and levy to ensure they remain appropriate and no higher than required to recover the costs of running the scheme.

Outside of consultation scope

Opposition to self-certification in principle

A number of submitters expressed concerns about self-certification generally or preferred that all sanitary plumbing and drainlaying work continue to be inspected by building consent authorities.

The Board notes that the legislative framework enabling self-certification has been established by Government. The purpose of this consultation was to seek feedback on the endorsement requirements, operating conditions, fees, and audit levy that will apply to practitioners who choose to participate in the scheme. The Board has carefully considered the concerns raised and has sought to ensure that the scheme includes appropriate safeguards, including eligibility requirements, training, recordkeeping obligations, audits, and disciplinary processes.

Comparisons to gasfitting certification

The self-certification scheme is fundamentally different from the gasfitting certification regime and was established by Government for a different purpose. Gasfitting certification is part of the gas safety regulatory framework administered under the Gas (Safety and Measurement) Regulations and overseen by WorkSafe New Zealand's Energy Safety function. It applies to gasfitting work as a mandatory safety certification regime.

By comparison, the self-certification scheme for sanitary plumbing and drainlaying is an opt-in scheme established through amendments to the Plumbers, Gasfitters, and Drainlayers Act 2006. The scheme is focused on allowing endorsed practitioners to certify compliance with building consent requirements for eligible work, rather than replacing a safety certification regime. The legislative framework was established by the Government. Within that framework, the Board has set the eligibility requirements, operating conditions, fees, and audit levy through the Notice. The Board's role is to oversee and administer the scheme within that framework.

Preference to retain independent council inspections entirely

Practitioners can continue to have their work inspected by building consent authorities in the usual way if they choose not to participate in the self-certification scheme. Participation in the scheme is voluntary. Each practitioner will need to consider the costs of the scheme alongside the potential benefits of being able to self-certify their work and decide what makes sense for their business.

The choice to participate in self-certification sits at the point a practitioner decides whether to become endorsed and whether to undertake work that is intended to be self-certified. Where a building consent has been issued on the basis that eligible work will be self-certified, the endorsed practitioner is expected to meet the certification obligations that apply under the scheme.

The self-certification scheme provides an additional pathway for eligible work rather than replacing the existing building consent inspection framework. The decision to use self-certification is linked to how the work proceeds through the building consent process. Practitioners can choose whether to participate in the scheme and whether to undertake work intended to be self-certified, but cannot simply switch between self-certification and BCA inspection during a project without the necessary consent process being followed.

Separate endorsement pathways for sole operators and companies

The Board regulates licensed individuals, not companies. The Board's regulatory authority under the Act applies to licensed individuals, not companies.

Endorsements will be granted to individual practitioners and sit against the practitioner's licence. This reflects the fact that certification is a professional judgement made by the individual practitioner. The practitioner whose name is on the certificate is responsible for inspecting the work and confirming that it complies with the building consent.

Summary

The Board would like to take this opportunity to thank those individuals who took the time to read and respond to its consultation document. Feedback received through the consultation process has helped inform the development of the scheme and supporting implementation materials. The Board looks forward to supporting practitioners as the self-certification scheme commences on 7 September 2026.